

FirstNet will follow federal procurement rules, but delays in the process will not be allowed, CEO Poth says

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CHICAGO— [FirstNet](#) will not cut procedural corners or accept unnecessary delays as it enters the final stages of the procurement to select a contractor that will be tasked to build and maintain a nationwide public-safety broadband network (NPSBN) for the next 25 years, FirstNet CEO Mike Poth said yesterday.

Although FirstNet did not meet the Nov. 1 target date for announcing its contractor selection, Poth said he is “extremely encouraged by the progress” to date. Reiterating a commitment outlined in a blog he authored last week, Poth stressed the importance of the FirstNet procurement following all steps outlined in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and that FirstNet “do it right” when selecting its contractor team.

“I will not trade quality for expediency,” Poth said during a brief speech to open [IWCE](#)’s Critical [LTE](#) Communications Forum on Wednesday. “I will not trade conducting a thorough, fair, balanced evaluation of all offers to hit a date. I have not, and will not, allow lobbying or influence to affect any decision or action that is taken.

“We’re going to make sure we do it right. We’re following the steps with the federal acquisition regulation, or FAR. We’ve come too far, and there’s too much at stake, to do it any other way.”

While FirstNet will be careful to follow federal procurement rules, Poth said he would not allow unnecessary delays to slow the procurement process.

“I will not allow delays from FirstNet,” he said. “I will not allow delays from the government, whether it is change from the administrations or even the holidays—we won’t allow it. We’re moving quickly. Public safety is counting on us, our state and local partners are counting on us, and the federal government is counting on us.”

Poth referenced the long-term nature of the 25-year award and the need for the much-anticipated network to evolve throughout the performance period.

“Yes, the network is needed now,” Poth said. “But we will have a sustainable model that will make sure that the network will endure for the next 25 years. We’re also making sure that the partnership delivers for public safety throughout the life of the contract.

“While we don’t know what public safety will need 20—or even 10—years from now, we are taking steps to have a contract that prepares and stands the test of time for us into the future .. We’ll also hold our new partner accountable to the buildout milestones and adoption targets in the contract. As with any procurement, if they don’t deliver, they don’t get paid—it’s as simple as that.”

Poth declined to field questions from the audience after making his speech, citing the ongoing procurement process.

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